

6/15/2009 This Week in Congress

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June 15, 2009

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Agriculture Hearing on Cap and Tax Bill

On Thursday, the House Agriculture Committee held a seven hour hearing to review the Waxman/Markey cap and tax climate change legislation. At the hearing, both Democrat and Republican members voiced frustration with this bill's hastily crafted, ill-conceived provisions. Despite unveiling this 1,000 page document less than one month ago, the Speaker of the House is intent on forcing this legislation to a vote despite any solid economic analysis on the impact of the legislation. This was acknowledged by Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack. I asked the Secretary: "What do you estimate the increase in costs to be for farmers as a result of this legislation?" He replied: "I can't give you a specific number today, in large part because the analysis upon which we would make that determination has not been completed.... I think it is fair to say there may be additional costs associated with a farming operation, but it is very difficult to quantify."

What we do know is the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) says this bill will raise government revenue by \$846 billion in the first ten years of this legislation's life. In laymen's terms, this means a huge tax increase. This is only the beginning, however, because the Waxman/Markey cap and tax legislation is permanent. It is estimated that beyond the ten-year budget window, the costs imposed by this bill will dramatically increase as carbon allowances become more expensive.

Due to the way this legislation is written, Midwestern states would bear the brunt of the economic blow because of the inequitable way carbon allowances are allocated - giving excess carbon allowances to east and west coast power plants, while shortchanging allowances given to Midwestern electric cooperatives. Those in rural communities, where we must travel greater distances for work, school, and medical care, will pay disproportionately compared to our urban cousins who have shorter distances to travel and can use public transportation.

At the hearing, eight witnesses from groups that represented agricultural producers, conservation organizations, and agribusiness stated that they opposed the Waxman/Markey bill in its current form. I too oppose this legislation and hope that more hearings will be held and Members of Congress will be allowed to amend this legislation to prevent the significant effect it will have on the price of goods needed to conduct our daily lives. [Click here to view my remarks during the hearing.](#)

Sponsoring Legislation to Save Community Auto Dealers

This week, I sponsored legislation to protect community automobile dealers after GM and Chrysler sent notifications to cancel contracts to specific dealerships nationwide. After recently declaring bankruptcy, these two franchise companies closed community dealerships leaving automobile dealers with millions of dollars invested in car stock. Community dealerships bring in revenue to the companies and closing them down will offer no benefits to GM or Chrysler. H.R. 2743, the Automobile Dealer Economic Restoration Act, prohibits additional closures for local dealerships and forces franchise automobile makers to continue to honor their contracts with community dealerships.

I have worked to find a solution to prevent community auto dealers from being forced to close their doors. Last month, I talked with the White House to share the concerns I have heard from Kansas auto dealers and also recently joined Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins in opposing the Automotive Task Force and the White House plan for the Auto Industry. I am glad to sponsor this legislation as it will save dealers' contracts with GM and Chrysler and will protect local dealerships, economies and jobs.

Speaking to Kansas Governor's Military Council

This week, I spoke to members of the Governor's Military Council in the Capitol Visitor Center during their visit to Washington, D.C. Formed by the Governor's office in 2006, the Governor's Military Council is made up of appointed military and community leaders to maintain and strengthen the military presence in the state of Kansas. As a member of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, I was glad to have the opportunity to speak with the Council about military issues affecting our Kansas communities.

Thanks to Executive Director John Armbrust of Manhattan; Pat Gallagher of Wichita; Alonzo Harrison of Topeka; Zarchary Hauser of Topeka; Doug Kinsinger of Topeka; John Montgomery of Junction City; Adam Nordstrom of Washington, D.C.; State Senator Roger Reitz of Manhattan; Tim Rogers of Salina; Mike Shilling of Manhattan; Linda Weis of Manhattan; and General Deborah Rose of Topeka, with the Kansas National Guard. [Click here for a photo.](#)

Subcommittee Hearing to Review Credit Conditions in Rural America

On Thursday morning I attended a hearing held by the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Credit, Energy, and Research to review credit conditions in rural America. The Subcommittee heard from seven different witnesses involved in various aspects of agricultural lending. Bob Frazee, a witness testifying on behalf of Farm Credit, in

response to my questions, indicated the federal government's backing of Government Sponsored Enterprises (GSE) like Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac through bailout funds has made it more expensive for GSE's like Farm Credit, which did not accept bailout funds, to access capital. This results in higher interest costs to farmers.

Fred Bauer, testifying on behalf of the Independent Community Bankers, voiced frustration with the federal government's bailout of large investment banks. He noted that while the financial crisis has led to challenges for some community banks, many community banks continue to make credit available to farmers and ranchers. In addition, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) discussed the increase in demand for FSA direct and guaranteed operating and ownership loans. Currently, demand for these FSA loans is outpacing the funds available. FSA, however, reported it is trying to find additional funds to service part of the backlog of loan applications.

Iran's Presidential Election Will Not Affect Nuclear Program

Before the results of Iran's now-disputed presidential election were reported, I reminded Members of the House of Representatives this week that the election will not likely have an impact on Iran's illegal nuclear program. The President of Iran has minimal influence over the country's national security policies. Those decisions are controlled by the unelected Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. I encouraged my colleagues and the Obama Administration to immediately back engagement with tougher actions. Iran must not be allowed to possess nuclear weapons. [Click here to read my remarks.](#)

Visiting with Kansas Chapter of Young Presidents Organization

On Thursday, I met with members of the Kansas Chapter of the Young Presidents Organization (YPO) in Washington, D.C. Since 1950, the YPO has been a leading organization for connecting business professionals so members can exchange ideas, pursue learning opportunities and encourage business growth. Small businesses are the backbone of

Kansas communities and I was glad to be able to speak to the YPO members from the Wichita community, and their families, during their visit.

Thanks to the following members who attended: John and Kristen Clevenger with Commerce Bank; C.R. and Lindsey Hall with Hall's Culligan Water Conditioning; Paul and Lisa Jackson with Vantage Properties; Greg and Rachel Kossover with Consolidated Holdings, Inc.; Trent and Mary Lou McKenzie with Bushwood Investments; Ed and Colleen Mikesell with SKT Companies; Matt and Krsita Onofrio with GT Midwest; Aaron and Angela Pirner with Cap Carpet, Inc.; Mike and Susan Pompeo with Sentry International; Dan and Jennifer Stuttherheim with Kasa Industrial Controls; and Randy and Frieda Mai Weis with PKM Steel Service. Also thanks to Mike Pompeo, for inviting me to attend.

Delivering the Keynote at the 1st Anniversary Ceremony of the Chapman Tornado

On Saturday, I visited Chapman for the 1st anniversary celebration after the tornado. Chapman received extensive damage when a tornado touched down on the evening of June 12, 2008. Within the past year, the town and its community has faced tremendous circumstances in the aftermath of a very destructive tornado. During the ceremony, I observed the town's recovery efforts and commended them for rebuilding so quickly. I was honored to attend the ceremony and have the opportunity to visit with community members to learn more about their recovery efforts. Also attending the ceremony was State Senator Jay Emler and State Representative Vern Swanson. Thank you to Marietta Lucas, city clerk, for inviting me to attend.

Speaking at the Kansas VFW State Convention

On Saturday, I spoke at the annual State Convention of the Department of Kansas Veterans of Foreign Wars in Topeka. I appreciated the opportunity to pay tribute to Kansas veterans and to speak to them about our work in our nation's capital on their behalf. I discussed the importance of timely and sufficient VA budgets and efforts to improve access to

care for rural veterans, such as new outpatient clinics and increasing the mileage rate so veterans can afford the trip to the VA doctor. I also spoke with the Ladies Auxiliary VFW, an organization that supports our troops as well as veterans and their families. While at the event I toured the new VA mobile counseling center, which is a motor coach that brings mental health services closer to rural and underserved Kansan veterans across the state who otherwise may not have access to this important care. Thanks to VFW State Commander Herb Schwartzkopf and to Ladies Auxiliary President Jeanette Cox.

Rice County District Hospital 50th Anniversary

On Sunday, I was in Lyons to present the keynote address for the 50th anniversary celebration of the renovated Rice County District Hospital. Community hospitals are tremendously important to the health and well-being of citizens and help attract young families into the area. It was good to talk to so many Kansans during the event. Also making comments were Terry David, former Chairman of the Board; Dr. Roger Tobias; and Tom Bell, with the Kansas Hospital Association. Thanks to Administrator Bob Mullen for inviting me to the dedication.

Rural Letter Carriers in Manhattan

I spoke to members of the Kansas Rural Letter Carriers' Association on Monday at their annual convention in Manhattan. There are approximately 1,600 Rural Letter Carriers in Kansas who make sure Kansans receive timely and regular mail delivery. Maintaining delivery for rural residents is essential to the livelihood of communities across our state. I spoke to members of the association about efforts in Congress to help the U.S. Postal Service through difficult economic times and legislation that would correct unfair rules for some postal service retirees. Thanks to Steve Barnhart of Wichita, President of the Kansas Rural Letter Carriers' Association, for inviting me to speak.

Jazz in Overland Park

After flying back to Kansas Friday afternoon, I stopped in Overland Park to attend Jazz in the Woods, a free community event organized by the Overland Park South Rotary Club. The annual festival is a fund raiser for local children's charities. This year, funds raised will go to the Fox 4 Love Fund for Children, Marillac, the Lee Ann Britain Infant Development Center and the Overland Park South Rotary Club Foundation. It was great to see so many members of the community come out to support a good cause. Thanks to all of the volunteers for helping make the event a success and Rotarian, Cindy Green, for her hospitality.

Visiting Fort Scott Cemetery

Two weeks ago, I made a visit to Fort Scott National Cemetery in Fort Scott. A National Cemetery is generally a military cemetery containing the graves of U.S. military personnel, veterans and their spouses. In 1999, Fort Scott National Cemetery was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. I was glad to have the opportunity to visit one of our Kansas cemeteries that honors our state military members.

In the Office

Jordan Hildebrand, Alisa Wendelburgh and Merlyn Spare of Stafford; Jillian Martin and Laela Menzer of Great Bend; and Trenton Heinen of Downs were in the office with Kansas FFA to learn about Congress and discuss current issues being debated in Washington. Greg Noll and Vickie Woodbury of Topeka, John Jacobson of Wichita, Jim Brewer of Leon, Don Reinert of Peabody, Dan Carrigan of Overland Park and Jay Jackson of Olathe, with the Propane Marketers for Kansas, came into the office this week to talk about how climate change legislation would affect the propane industry. Haley DaVe of Topeka, with the Kansas Credit Union, stopped in to discuss regulatory reform in the financial services industry.

Jeane Hultquist of Wichita was in with U.S. Ag Bank to tell me how current economic conditions are affecting the Farm Credit System. Allan Sents of McPherson, with the U.S. Cattleman's Association, came by to discuss issues affecting the beef industry. Chris and Joanna Wilson of Manhattan, Lois Schlickeau of Hutchinson, Abby Dechant of Alma and Carolyn Kleiber of Hillsboro, with Kansas Agri-Women, visited the office to share the group's views on a variety of issues affecting the agricultural industry.

Jennifer and Ashlee Martinson and Lou Ann Kibee of Hays; Billy Thompson, Garrett Hamm and Roger Frischenmeyer of Hutchinson; Don Dew of Gorham, Marie Clement of Mayetta; and Nick Wilder of Lawrence, with SKIL of Western Kansas, stopped by to discuss policies to secure inclusion and equality for disabled Kansans. Dana Knott of Hutchinson came in with Dillon's Stores to update me on Dillon's efforts to help feed the hungry in Kansas. Molly and Peggy Johnson of Wichita, Gay Cornell of Coffeetown and Pamela Black of Valley Center were in with One Voice Against Cancer to visit about support of cancer research, screening and early detection initiatives.

Christine Seaton of Wichita, with American Nephrology Nurses' Association (ANNA), stopped by to discuss support for nursing workforce development programs and funding for kidney disease. Rose Mary Mohr, Larry Walton, Sherri Luthe and Teresa Carelady of Wichita, with Mental Health America, visited the office to talk about programs to support the mental health and wellness of Kansas youth and families. Phil Bradley of Topeka was in with the Kansas Licensed Beverage Association to share his opposition to proposals that would tax licensed beverages to pay for a public health plan.

Lori Church, Les Diehl, David Hanson and Terry Tiede of Topeka; Keith Birkhead and Rick Wilborn of McPherson; and Tony and Kristi Kimmi of Manhattan, with the Kansas Insurance Association, stopped in to discuss the federal government's role in regulating insurance products as well as to update me on upcoming legislation. Johnnie Johnson and Brian Spurgeon of Hays, with the Rural Cellular Association, came in to talk about the Universal Service Fund, data roaming agreements and the importance of expanding availability of mobile devices for rural customers. Chris Orwoll of Hutchinson, with the Kansas Cosmosphere and Space Center, visited the office to discuss the Cosmosphere's cultural and educational value to the state and the need to ensure its viable future.

Cori Wenger and Donna Forintino of Topeka, with Osteoporosis Services, came by to discuss how to address the growing problem of osteoporosis and preventable bone fractures. Half of all women and one fourth of all men over age 50 will experience an osteoporosis related fracture in their lifetime, at a cost of more than \$18 billion per year. Timothy Rogers, Executive Director of the Salina Municipal Airport, was in to update me on the future plans at the Salina airport. Gary Shorman of Hays, Chuck Westin of Belleville and Eric Payne of Wichita also stopped by to visit.

Cindy Green of Leawood, visited my office as a member of the Kansas Association of Realtors to discuss energy efficient building policy, health care reform legislation and the homebuyer tax credit.

Several Kansans visited my Washington, D.C., office this week to receive a Capitol tour, including Larry and Cathy Dunlap and Larry and Helen Gregg of Salina, Ellie Dunlap of Lawrence, David and Madison Nichols of Topeka and John and Carol Pearson of Lindsborg. Also in for a tour were Erik, Kathryn and Isaac Ganstrom of Seneca; Katie Greenwood of Beloit; Jason and Niki Tollefson of Hiawatha; Rory and Tricia Poulain of Hutchinson; Catherine Losey of Hugoton; and Vicky Wilkinson of Emporia. In from Bogue were Timothy, Karen and Seth Thompson; Carlie and Cody Johnson; Larry and Beth Beam; Wyatt Robinson; Christian Covington; and Bryn Benoit.

Very truly yours,

Jerry